

University of Zagreb

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Department of English

THE ROLE OF OUT-OF-CLASSROOM EXPOSURE TO FOREIGN MUSIC IN L2
DEVELOPMENT OF CROATIAN LEARNERS OF ENGLISH

Graduation thesis

Student : Iris Marinković

Supervisor : Assistant professor, dr.sc. Renata Geld

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ABSTRACT

In the field of language teaching, or any teaching for that matter, learning techniques are an area which has been researched for years and which was given a lot of attention from both teachers and students. However, when it comes to learning languages, the possibility of easier acquirement of a language through music has not yet been fully researched. The issue was to find available studies and empirical research for drawing plausible conclusions about the connection between listening to songs in a foreign language while learning that language. This lack of research, especially research done in Croatia, was one of the main reasons for choosing this topic. In order to see if we might obtain some interesting results on the subject while investigating a thesis which was not yet proven, we decided to conduct a study that might shed more light on the topic.

This study aims to assess the possible connection between listening to music in a target language, in this case, English, and one's knowledge of English. More accurately, whether the amount of time one spends listening to music in the target language and the conscious effort one invests in the understanding of a song actually help the individual to learn and master the language. For this purpose, we designed a questionnaire for students who have been learning English for at least five years. Thus the 7th and 8th grade of elementary school and high school students were asked about their habits of listening to music in English and their opinion about the role of songs in English in their learning process. The results obtained are vague. With the majority of the subjects reporting to listen to songs in English on a daily basis and having high grades in English, few correlations were found between variables, but not enough to prove the claim that music aids the language learning process. Albeit, they did not completely refute that premise.

For this type of study, where the subjects are questioned about their habits, a higher number of subjects is needed in order to obtain conclusive results. For the time being, this study provides a glimpse into the habits of an average Croatian learner of English between the ages of 13 to 18 when it comes to listening to songs in the English language.

KEY WORDS: pop songs, music, English as a foreign language, music in classroom

INTRODUCTION

Music has been known to provoke different emotions and affect a mind in various ways. Psychological research is abundant with data that proves its effect on the mind, performance or emotions. Furthermore, language and music are one of the main characteristics which separate us from animals and are both related to hearing. Consequently, it is not illogical to assume that these characteristics may in a way be connected or, to an extent, even work hand in hand. However, there is not much research available on the effect of music on foreign language acquisition. To the extent of our knowledge, the power of music lies, first of all, in its ability to capture one's attention and elicit emotions. When one likes a melody of a song they are likely to listen to it again and again. It is likely that some of the lyrics of that song will be memorised without conscious intention. If one decides to pursue this feeling of enjoyment of music and the interest in the song they might even search for the lyrics, even if they were in a different language. The meaning that completes the melody is important and here the lyrics come into play. The understanding of strict grammar rules is softened by the melody and one's enjoyment in it so the meaning can be more easily conveyed and syntactic structures more easily remembered for future use. Music may contribute to a more spontaneous learning process, which most students often need.

Guided by these notions, the purpose of this study was to try to provide some evidence to support the claim that music and the lyrics paired with frequent listening to music in a foreign language lead to positive results in language learning. The processing of music and lyrics are the key points on which we focused our attention in this study. More specifically, we investigated the possible effect melody and lyrics in *popular music* may have on the process of learning a second language, in this case English, in Croatian elementary and high school learners.

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK - PREVIOUS RESEARCH

1.1. NEUROSCIENCE AND MUSIC

The exact effect music might have on second language acquisition is not yet fully studied. However, there have been studies done where music was implemented in the classroom and popular songs were used as an educational tool in order to help learners remember new vocabulary or new grammatical structures. Most of these studies show positive results with the implementation of music and we shall discuss the results of some of them later on. But first, we shall briefly present some psychological and neuroscientific research which provides evidence for the beneficial effect of music on our minds. More specifically, the way in which the brain processes lyrics, music and rhythm.

In the realm of psychology, music was mostly studied for its positive effects on one's mood. But that is not the only thing such research shows. Psychological research and studies have shown some interesting data about human perception of music and lyrics. In his book about music and cognition, Perry R. Cook (1999) notes some interesting findings and even though he does not link them to language acquisition, he provides enough data which we believe is relevant to the issue at hand. When it comes to lyrics and the language used in a song, Cook (1999) is fascinated by the memory capacity of ballad singers who often sing or recite epic poetry. He recognizes, guided by other previous research, that this memory is facilitated by the song or a poem itself "because the structures are based in part on rhyme, rhythm, alliteration, melodic emphasis, style and story progression" (Perry R. Cook 1999, p. 216). In such singing or reciting it would often happen that by changing word sequence one would also change the rhythm of the verse as well.

Basically, Cook is saying that music and lyrics in it are related and changing one usually means that the other will change as well. The lyrics that follow the beat and the melody "resonate", so to say, together. We know this because we all tend to hear when someone sings out of tune or misses a beat. Cook also mentions a study where eleven singers performed the same ballad but on two separate occasions and they had changed the lyrics. However, they did not change the lyrics enough for the song to be affected, nor the storyline. The words changed were actually only synonyms of the one before. Here is an example:

"Can't you shovel in a little more coal" - "Saying shovel in a little more coal".

or: "She cried: Bold captain, tell me true"- "She cried: Brave captain, tell me true".
(Perry R. Cook 1999, p. 216)

Such changes can be easily elicited from a more experienced language learner, which is something that is often done in second language classes- asking a student to provide a synonym. With lyrics, one could also ask for the words to rhyme with each other and have a similar amount of syllables. As Cook himself says: "The lyrics and storyline together provide multiple redundant constraints to assist the recall of a passage", which offers another argument in favour of learning through song to better understand language. Cook also adds experimental data from another author, Serafine *et al* (1984), which affirms that the representation of lyrics is linked with the memory representation of a melody. On top of all of this, Cook goes on to note some deficits in the brain that usually occur after a person has suffered a brain injury. These are "amusia" which involves difficulties in musical perception and one's ability to read or write music or perform musically and "aphasia" which includes various impairments in one's ability to speak or process speech. It's been found that amusia often accompanies aphasia. This implies a neuroanatomical connection between language and music.

More studies that link music and language have been conducted and even though they are few, the results of such studies seem promising for they point to the neuroanatomical location of processing both language and music and to music having something equivalent to syntax, i.e. musical syntax. After studying the processing of different chords played to the subjects and their processing of the possible dissonant chords, one research concluded (Mael *et al*, 2001) that we react to a "dissonant" chord, or a chord that contains out-of-key notes. The interesting fact about this is that according to trained musicians, the dissonance is something we hear and feel when the previous musical context does not fit the one that follows. So, what made the dissonant chords sound unexpected was the previously heard musical context. And this forms a principle or a rule of music, which in theory may be thought of as musical syntax (Mael *et al*, 2001). In 2001, a neuroscientific study was conducted about the way the human brain processes music. This research also entertained the idea that music, just like language, might have syntax. Or at least something equivalent to it. The research consisted of using magnetoencephalography (MEG) which measured the so called early right-anterior negativity (ERAN), which apparently happens in the brain when a "harmonically inappropriate chord" (Maes *et al*, 2001, p. 1) is heard. To put it simply, they were scanning people's brains while they listened to music. When we say music, we mean

specifically selected set of chords. According to the theory of harmony: "Harmonically appropriate chords are tonally related chords or chord functions that fit well at certain positions in a musical context" (Maes *et al*, 2001, p. 541). The inappropriate chords would elicit the aforementioned early right-anterior negativity. So, the subjects would listen to a carefully selected set of chords and some of them contained out-of key notes. The out-of key chords are "more distant from the tonal centre and therefore perceived as unexpected" (Maes *et al*, 2001, p. 541), and as we have mentioned before, what makes certain chords inappropriate or unexpected is the previously heard musical content. Suppose one speaks of new office supplies and the need for more staples and how much that would cost, then simply instead of the word "staple" starts using the word "cow". In musical terminology, we could say that they had spoken out of key. Similar to the data Cook provided about lyrics and the possibility to interchange them under the condition that they stay synonymous; it seems that musical chords can be interpreted in the same way. Whether one listens to music or a speech, so long as a chord (word) fits the context set before, a new chord, a synonymous chord (word) may be used and accepted in the following passage (paragraph) at a syntactical level of both language and music.

The findings of Maes *et al* (2001) study suggest that the area of the brain activated during the musical experiment was the Broca's area and its right-hemisphere homologue. "Like syntactic information of language, which is fast and automatically processed in Broca's area and its right- hemisphere homologue, music- syntactic information processed in the same brain structures also seems to be processed automatically" (Maes *et al*, 2001: 546). In essence, their study shows a neuroanatomical relationship between the processing of both music and language

1.2. LANGUAGE LEARNING AND MUSIC

1.2.1. THE LINGUISTIC ASPECTS OF A POP SONG

The benefits of pop songs in language learning are not a common topic, however, they have not gone completely unexplored. Some specifics of popular songs are perfect for easy learning of certain language features and studies have been done to support that assumption. One such study (Murphy, 1992) in particular provides a detailed description of lyrics used in popular music and concludes that there are many aspects which may prove to be highly beneficial if used in language learning. According to the author of that study, Tim Murphy, pop songs are “....repetitive, conversationlike and about half the speed of spoken discourse. This simplicity, their highly affective and dialogic features, and their vague references (ghost discourse), allow listeners to use them in personally associative ways” (Murphy, 1992, p. 771).

Repetition is the mother of learning, as the old Romans knew well, and one may have noticed whether it be in English or some other language, pop songs often repeat a lot of the same phrases. Furthermore, the everyday, easy going and non-demanding dialogue makes the language easier to acquire and more useful to a learner (Murphy, 1992). In this particular study, Murphy analysed the lyrics of 50 pop songs from Music&Media’s Hot 100 Chart of 1987. He concluded that each word in those songs is repeated about three times, and about 25% of the corpus of the lyrics contains only 10 words. These words are : I, you, me, my, the, a, and , to, the auxiliary “gonna” and the noun/verb “love”. This allows for a similar context, which does not wear out one’s mind while one tries to decipher the word meaning or generally understand the song. Also, the frequent usage of the articles “the” and “a” is helpful to the learner for these are the fundamental parts of the English language and often difficult for the learners. Especially for those whose mother tongue does not have articles to pick up and put into use correctly. By mostly using the “I” pronoun, which implies that the listener is directly involved, lyrics help one to get into the groove so to say. Or as Murphy puts it: “As for *I*, 94% of the songs had unspecified first person referents. Songs apparently say what some listeners want to say anyway, literally putting the words into their mouths as they sing along. The fact that the *I* in the song has no name makes it easier for the listener to appropriate the words” (Murphy, 1992, p. 771). Furthermore, it is not just the first person, but “the frequent calling of *you* also encourages audience participation in the enunciation, contextualization, and meaning making of the song” (Murphy, 1992, p. 772). These features could also be

interpreted as the affective allure a song provides, making the listener more open to it and making it easier for them to enjoy.

In addition to this, Murphy (1992) states that the number of words sung per minute is also important because it is smaller by half when compared to the number of words spoken during normal speech. This is mostly due to the pauses accompanied only by the melody. For a listener who is learning and is trying to understand the song, those pauses are important. They give them time to reflect on the previously heard verse and echo what they heard. For the English language in specific, lyrics can provide another interesting tool for learning and make students feel immersed in the song. Apart from the “I” and “you” pronouns which one can identify with easily, there is often no specific gender referent so whether one is a boy or a girl it is easier to put oneself into the shoes (voice) of the singer and identify with the emotions (Murphy, 1992) .

To sum up Murphy’s detailed analysis of pop songs, in popular music there is a lot of repetition, which we know is good for learning in general. The sentences are also mostly short; they contain personal references but mostly in a vague manner, gender and time and place referents are absent most of the time, and the rate of speech of a pop song is usually only half the speed of normal speech.

From this, we may presume that for a more advanced audience pop songs may not be interesting or challenging enough. However, for beginner and intermediate learners, they may provide just enough information to entertain and learn at the same time.

1.2.2. MUSIC IN THE CLASSROOM

Now we move on to more specific studies, the ones directed towards language learning and the use of music and its linguistic aspects in a controlled setting, that is the classroom.

Apart from being used as a direct aid in the learning process, music might be used indirectly to facilitate learning. Since it is well known that music can improve one’s mood, Dolean and Dolean (2014) conducted a study to determine whether or not music can have positive influence on foreign language classroom anxiety. They used a scale developed by Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) designed to measure foreign language classroom anxiety. It is called FLCAS (foreign language anxiety scale) (Dolean and Dolean, 2014, p. 513). The

same authors also state that amongst researchers, there is a general consensus that the classroom anxiety is linked to unsatisfactory performance in the classroom. The study Dolean and Dolean (2014) conducted consisted of sixty Romanian speaking students divided into three classes. Class A was the class where students showed significantly higher anxiety level than in the classes B and C. English grades were also lower in class A although not statistically significant. In this study a program was implemented which consisted of specific methodological steps which were used for introducing songs to the classroom. The steps are:

Step 1. Teacher model reading and group translation (1time)

Step 2. Group reading (as often as necessary)

Step 3. Rhythmic group reading (2 times)

Step 4. Teacher model singing (1 time)

Step 5. Repetitions (2-3 times)

Step 6. Reading in a row individually (2 times)

Step 7. Final repetition (1 time)

(Dolean & Dolean, 2014: 515)

The teacher played the guitar throughout steps 4 to 7. The sessions would start with a ten minute repetition of the song learned the previous session. The students completed the FLCA test before and after the four weeks of specific music guided lessons. The statistical analysis of the group showed that after the four week session the anxiety in the test group dropped by 23, 55%. The control group were the students that did not participate in the experiment but have attended regular classes and their anxiety dropped by 3, 27%. The study has some drawbacks, for example, a different teacher taught through music which may have been the only reason the anxiety had decreased. In addition, the beneficial effect of music might be questioned due to the fact that the class went through the lyrics during one session for at least 9 times. One might argue that repeating something nine times is also quite sufficient for learning.

However the study still makes a good point for the overall decrease of 23, 55% that the students have noticed is sufficient and statistically relevant.

Some language teachers (Lems, 2005; Medina, 2000) and researchers (Xianming, and Brand, 2009., Murphy, 1992; Medina, 1993) have come to see how music can be beneficial for studying. Some have used music in classroom only to create nice ambience and setting certain mood and some decided to test the learning possibilities by using songs. The author Kristen Lems (2005) also refers to the aforementioned author Murphy and his article about the discourse of pop songs and its benefits such as a high-frequency vocabulary with little reference to time, place or exact pronouns all of which "creates an open-ended situation, allowing many kinds of background knowledge to come into play. In addition, songs tend to contain universal themes that make them easy for people to identify with, while creating an opportunity for "involuntary rehearsal" (Parr and Krashen, 1986, p. 275) of the new language within the brain" (Lems, 2005, p. 14). Another benefit the author has noticed from years of working as a teacher and using music in class is that it tends to stay with the students for a long time. She offers her experience and statements of her students to support that claim and notes:

Since I enjoy singing in class, I often give students a stapled packet of song lyrics at the beginning of the quarter (in accordance with fair-use policy for song lyrics) and teach them to sing a new song from it every week. By the end of the quarter, the students can sing ten new songs without assistance. Sometimes they even memorize them. Even more impressively, they remember these songs long after the course is over- and sing me the melodies when they come back to visit years later.

(Lems, 2005: 17)

Even though it is personal and very individual, this experience is valid because it proves the retention of a content of a lesson taught in class.

There are empirical studies where the immediate effects of learning through music were put to test. However, there are not many, and the results obtained, although often showing positive correlation between musical input and language structure or vocabulary learned, do not really provide definite and precise findings in support of music as a methodological tool. We shall describe and discuss some of them here, for they give a good insight into direct effects of music on language learning.

Xiangming Li and Manny Brand (2009) were also intrigued by the fact that despite of the excess number of research on music and its possible influence on language learning the

results gathered were often equivocal. They decided to conduct a study with Chinese students and record the influence of teaching a language using music as a methodological tool. With this in mind and the fact that they tried to isolate the influence of music, they divided their subjects into three groups. Two of those groups were taught with the help of music and were compared with another group of Chinese students who were taught the traditional way. Group 1 was the one taught solely with music. Group 2 was the half-music group; some songs were introduced but only half as many as with group 1. Group 3 was the no music group, so no songs were introduced or heard. All three groups were taught the same vocabulary, phrases and language in general by the same instructor. The implementation of music was the only dependent variable. The content taught was identical, same new vocabulary and same new phrases. In total it took nine hours of instruction. Songs used are considered classics, from bands such as The Beatles, Led Zeppelin, Rolling Stones and so on. A pretest and two posttests were done, one immediately after the instruction the other three weeks later to see how much of vocabulary learned during the sessions managed to stay encoded in the long-term memory. The level of English of the three groups prior to the instruction was ascertained with the help of the fact that the subjects have gained admission to a graduate law school for which they were required to pass an entrance examination in English. Therefore they were considered as upper intermediate ESL level. The results of the study are visible from posttests which showed a statistically significant difference in all-music group which had the highest posttest scores, however what was surprising, the group with the second highest score was not the half-music group but the no-music group. The same results were established three weeks later with the second posttest. One of the explanations provided by the authors is that music is most effective when it is used continuously and intensely. Along these lines, we would like to offer another explanation: different learning approaches take time to get accustomed to. We assume that most students in China were not used to singing songs in the class, and therefore the intermittent use of music was somewhat confusing for them. On the other hand, the all-music group probably had time to adjust.

Another study we wish to discuss used stories as a learning tool paired with music. Medina (1993) conducted an experiment in which she tested the effect of music but at the same time took into consideration other possible influences in the process of learning. As the dominant sense in humans is vision, this study investigates the relationship between auditory and visual perception and the influence of both auditory and visual input on the learning process. Separating and fusing these two types of input and analysing the results in all cases,

allows for the elimination of the influence of learning tools provided by sight and its aid in acquisition while pinpointing the actual effects of music on the learning process or the lack thereof. The 48 subjects were divided into 4 groups depending on the visual and audio stimuli provided during learning. They were learning via storytelling where the same story was either sung and had illustrations as back-up, or was only sung with no illustrations provided or had the illustrations accompany the plot but no song, or had neither of those. Basically, group 1 was the No Music/Illustrations (story spoken with illustrations), group 2 No Music/No Illustrations (story spoken without illustrations), group 3 Music/ Illustrations (story sung with illustrations) and group 4 Music/ No Illustrations (story sung without illustrations). A pretest of vocabulary was carried out and two posttests, one at the end of the four-day treatment period and the other one and a half weeks after the last treatment to gain some insight into the long-term effects of music and illustrations. In both posttests the third group where both music and illustrations were used showed the most significant progress, namely they had learned more words than the other three groups and the results were the same in the second posttest, that is, even though the amount of memorized vocabulary had somewhat decreased, the same group showed the most vocabulary retention. The second most accomplished group was the group which was provided only with illustrations and no music and the third, the only music group. From this research one might conclude that visual input aided by auditory input (in this case musical background) provides best support for learning, while in the absence of visual input the learners will respond better to music as opposed to no music.

2. RESEARCH

2.1. AIM

The main aim of this study was to establish a possible link between the learners who listen to songs in the English language and their grades in English. The primary hypothesis was that learners who listen to songs in the English language every day also had higher grades in English.

The second hypothesis was that the learners who paid more attention to lyrics also had better grades in English.

The third hypothesis is that those who struggle with understanding lyrics in English and the song in general also have lower grades.

We also collected data about the age of the participants, how long they had been learning English in general, and what they think about the benefits of listening to music in a foreign language.

2.2. SAMPLE

The learners who partook in this study were 46 elementary school students, 7th and 8th grade and 180 high school students of all grades. There were ten 13 year olds, seventy one 14 or 15, a hundred and thirty are 16 or 17 and fifteen 18 years old.

There were six 7th graders, forty 8th graders, seventeen in the first year of high school, sixty seven in the second year, seventy one in the third year and twenty five are in the fourth year of high school. (see Table 1)

Table 1. *Number of students and the grade they attended.*

7th grade	8th grade	1st grade HS	2nd grade HS	3rd grade HS	4th grade HS
6	40	17	67	71	25

2.3. PROCEDURE

The students were asked to fill in the questionnaire about their habits of listening to music in English and their grades. They were specifically asked to focus only on the music they listen in English and disregard any other foreign language music. First part of the questionnaire was about their habit of listening to music, frequency of listening, the media used and most importantly what they focus on while listening. The options offered were: only music, only lyrics, music and lyrics or none of the above.

The second part focused on how they would judge their understanding of songs heard in English. They were asked to grade themselves, on a Likert scale, on how well they understand songs or if they had trouble understanding lyrics or general theme of songs. This part also includes questions about their involvement in the process of music listening, that is if they considered themselves passive listeners or if they believed to be engaging themselves more into a song. Therefore they were asked to ascertain that on a Likert scale if and how often do they actually take the time to write down the lyrics of a song they love and maybe learn the lyrics and sing it.

The third part was about evaluation and self-evaluation. The students were asked to circle the grade they most often had in English and then to grade themselves that is, their knowledge of spoken and written English and of their ability to listen and write in English.

The fourth part of the questionnaire was designed to evaluate how useful, if at all, the learners considered listening to songs in a target language is. They gave their opinion by marking either yes, no or maybe on the question whether they believe that listening to songs in a foreign language helps improve their listening skills, reading skills, or if writing down lyrics and searching for unknown words helps their writing or speaking skills both in and outside classroom.

The final part of the questionnaire contains general questions about age and grade they attend and the amount of time they had been studying English.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

We present the results of our findings here as based on our hypothesis. The results supporting the first hypothesis which states that those who spend more time listening to music also have better grades, are represented in Figure 1 and Table 2 bellow.

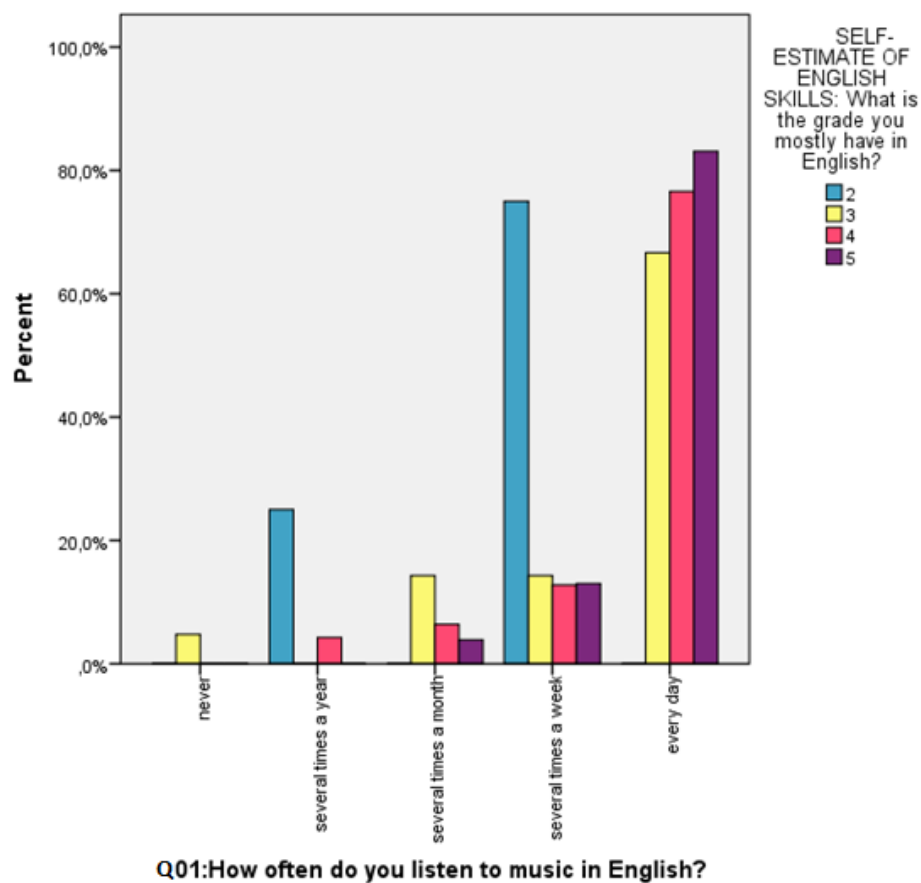


Figure 1. *The grade in English compared to frequency of listening to songs in English language.*

Table 2. A table comparing percentages of students with various grades and how often they listen to songs in English.

How often do you listen to songs in English?						
Grade in English		never	several times a year	several times a month	several times a week	every day
	2	0,0%	25%	0,00%	75%	0,00%
	3	4,8%	0,0%	14,3%	14,3%	66,7%
	4	0,00%	4,3%	6,4%	12,8%	76,6%
	5	0,00%	0,00%	39%	13%	83,1%

We see that the subjects who listen to songs in English language more often mostly have higher grades in English. Out of those who have a 5 (the highest grade), 83, 1% listen to music in English on a daily basis, whereas that percentage decreases as the grades decrease. Also, only those with the lowest grade reported they never listened to music in English on a daily basis. On the other hand, 39% of those with the highest grade listen to music in English only several times a month, which is not a small percentage of students, and it contradicts the rest of the data obtained.

Our second hypothesis stated that students who pay more attention to lyrics also have better grades in English. To test this hypothesis we compared the grades of the students with the answers they gave to the question about what they usually focus on while listening to music. For the purpose of this paper we considered the possibility that one may focus on several things while listening to a song, especially a pop song, such as the melody or the beat (that is music itself), lyrics, or both on music and lyrics. We also considered the option that some might like a certain auditory musical background while performing their daily tasks and during that time they may not be focusing on the music or lyrics at all.

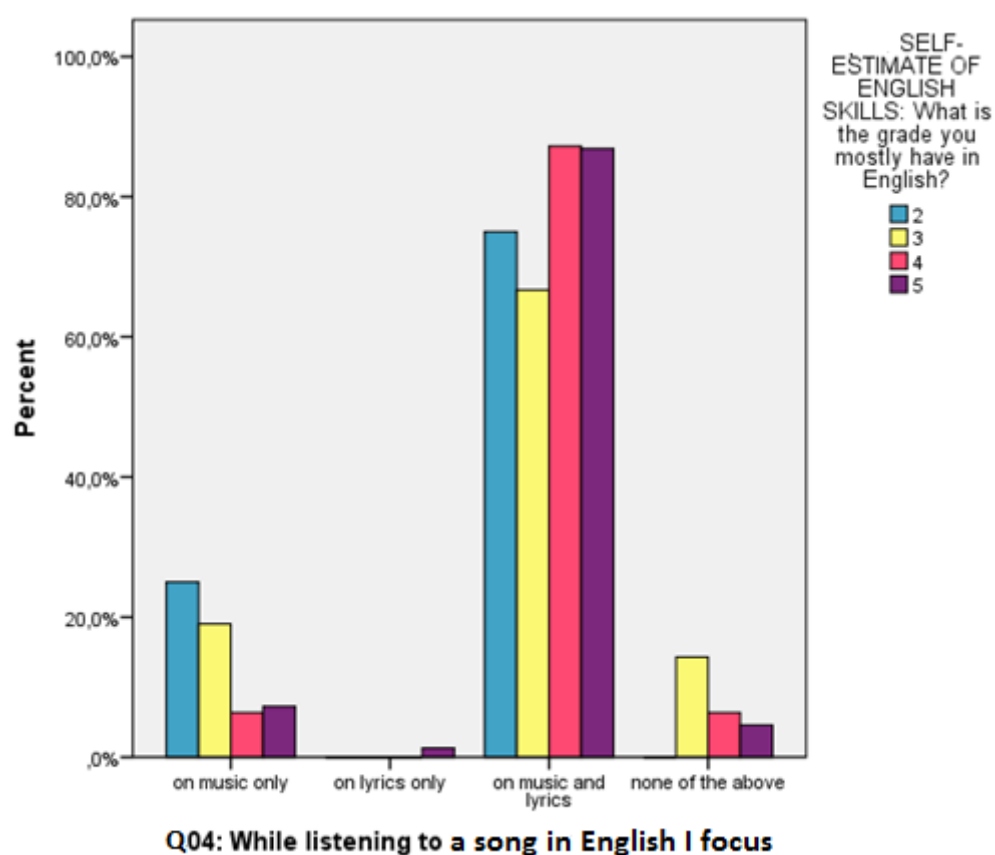


Figure 2. Comparing grades and what the learners focus on while listening to a song in English

Table 3. *The percentages of the grades in English compared with what one puts focus on while listening to songs in English.*

While listening to songs in English I focus on:					
Grade in English		music only	lyrics only	music and lyrics	none of the above
	2	5,3%	0,00%	1,6%	0,00%
	3	21,1%	0,00%	7,4%	23,1%
	4	15,8%	0,00%	21,6%	23,1%
	5	57,9%	100%	69,5%	53,8%

These two elements were taken into account together so as to provide some insight into whether or not what one focuses on while listening to music can help in one's learning process. The subjects who reported that they focus on both lyrics and music while listening to music in English had higher grades in English. Subjects who focus only on music (57,9%), only on lyrics (100%) and both (69,5%) or none of the above had the highest grade in English, so this data did not tell us much about the connection between what learners pay attention to while listening and their knowledge of English.

In order to find evidence that support the assumption that learner's engagement in the process of learning outside classroom (in this case paying more attention to music) may help one improve and acquire more vocabulary or phrases or general understanding of the language we asked whether the students actually take time to learn the lyrics of their favorite songs. So, we compared the answers to the grade and a specific question about learning the lyrics and maybe occasionally singing the song. The singing in this case implies more repetition and a more active usage of the language than just understanding the lyrics or searching for unknown words. The results are shown in Figure 3 and Table 4.

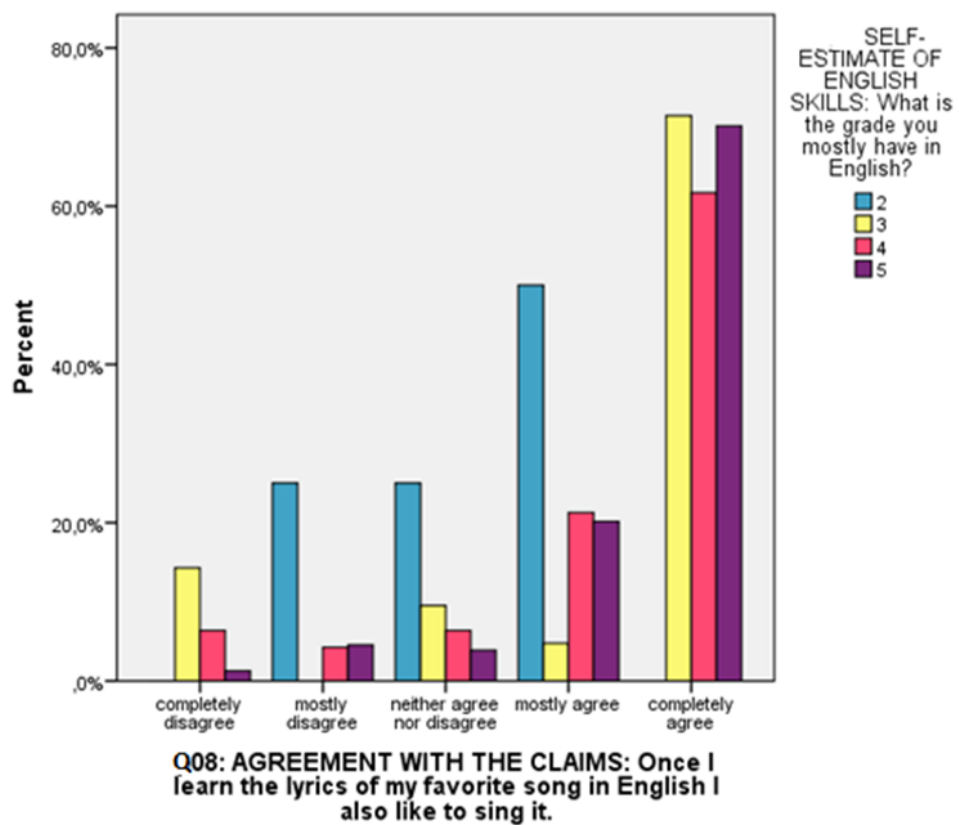


Figure 3. Comparing subject's grades with the amount of effort they invested in their favourite song

Table 4. Comparing the subject's grades with learning lyrics of a song.

Once I learn the lyrics of my favorite song in English I also like to sing it.						
Grade in English		Completely disagree	Mostly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly agree	Completely agree
	2	0,0%	10%	8,3%	4,5%	0,0%
	3	37,5%	0,0%	16,7%	2,3%	9,9%
	4	37,5%	20%	25%	22,7%	19,1%
	5	25%	70%	50,0%	70,5%	71,2%

Figure 3 and Table 4 show that the majority of learners who take the time and effort to learn the lyrics have the highest grade in English. It also shows that the majority of those who rarely do so, also have the highest grade. The problem with this question is that it does not consider the possibility that some learners simply do not like to sing, but might still be very competent language learners.

The third hypothesis was related to the question whether the easier understanding of a song is linked to one's proficiency in English, which was compared, once again, to the grades. While listening, one might not understand the lyrics or the theme of the song if it is sung in a foreign language. Thus, considering that possibility we decided to question general understanding of songs with the grades to see if there is a positive correlation between the two variables.

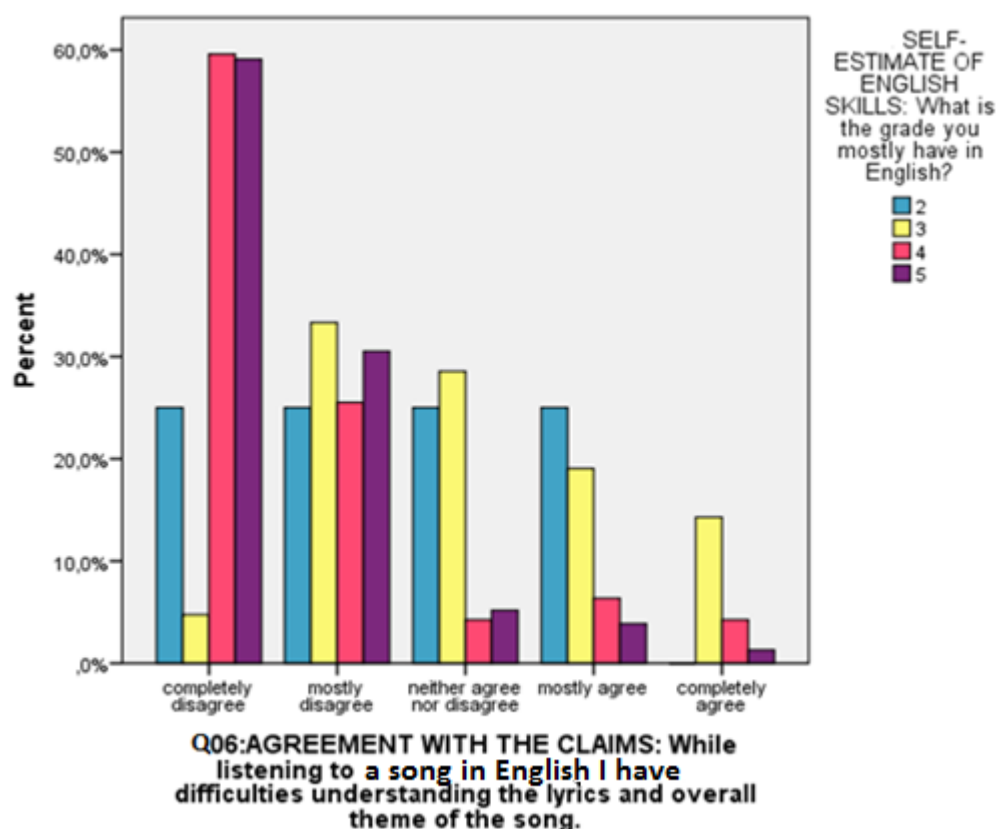


Figure 4. Grades in English compared to the ability to understand the lyrics and theme

Table 5. *Grades in English compared to the ability to understand the lyrics and theme.*

While listening to songs in English I have difficulties understanding the lyrics and overall theme of the song.						
Grade in English		Completely disagree	Mostly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly agree	Completely agree
	2	0,8%	1,5%	5,9%	7,1%	0,0%
	3	0,8%	10,4%	35,3%	28,6%	42,9%
	4	23,1%	17,0%	11,8%	21,4%	28,6%
	5	75,2%	70,1%	47,1%	42,9%	28,6%

The subjects who completely (75, 2%) or mostly (70, 1%) disagree with this statement mostly have the highest grade in English, that is 5. Among those who completely agree with this statement (42, 9%) the lowest grade reported in English is 3. Even though the analysis of these answers does not provide sufficient support, by crossing these two questions we may assume that the grades one has in English correspond to the actual proficiency of the learner and that the learner is probably aware of his/her own knowledge.

The results that follow are not related to any of the hypothesis, still we believe that they offer an interesting result, although not an unexpected one. When comparing the amount of time one has spent learning English, a slight correlation was noticed. Those who spent more time, in this case years learning the language also reported having better grades.

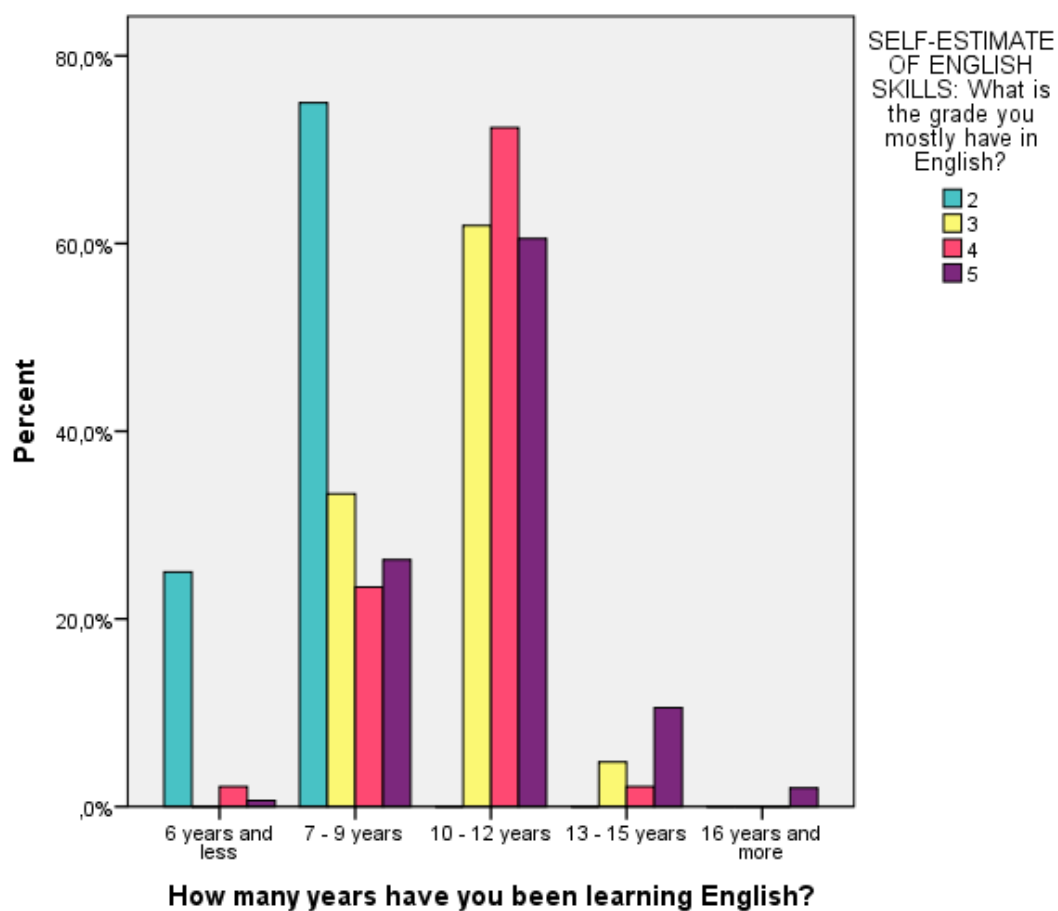


Figure 5. Compares the amount of time the subjects have spent learning English with their grades

Table 6. *The percentages of student's grades and the years they have spent learning English*

Years of learning English						
Grade in English		6 years and less	7-9 years	10-12 years	13-15 years	16 years and more
	2	33,3%	4,9%	0,00%	0,00	0,00%
	3	0,00%	11,5%	9,4%	5,6%	0,00%
	4	33,3%	18,0%	24,5%	66,2%	0,00%
	5	33,3%	65,2%	66,2%	88,9%	100,0%

It appears that these variables show the most consistent change, that is, the grades appear to be better the longer the subjects have been learning English. On the other hand, even though there is a significant connection between the two variables, however, that connection is still, weak and therefore a valid and concrete conclusion cannot be drawn from the results.

This study also questioned how the subjects in general feel about listening to music in a foreign language, that is, whether or not they believe it has a positive influence on their process of learning English. In general, most of them have answered positively to those questions; 89, 4% of them believe that listening to music in the English language helps them to better understand the language when they hear it on TV, or radio, and 73, 9% believe it also helps better understating in the classroom. 61,1% believes that writing out lyrics helps improve their literacy level in English, and 84, 5% believe that listening to songs in English also helps their pronunciation and ability to speak both in and outside classroom. When it comes to reading, 75, 2% believe that looking up lyrics and words helps them read other texts in English faster. Here we can see the attitude most students show towards listening to music in the English language which is mostly positive and something teachers might take into consideration while planning lessons.

The results obtained in this study point towards positive role of music in a target language and learning the target language. However, a direct link or a significant correlation between listening to music and, in this case, grades of the students in the English language class was not established. No direct link was found between the amount of effort one applies into listening, that is, searching for the lyrics and learning them and the knowledge of the English language. Another possible link surfaced between the length of time one has spent learning English, and the grade in English. Once again, the results point towards the fact that the more time one spends learning a language the better one knows the language. Those who have lower grades have spent less time learning English while those with the top grade have spent over 12 years learning it. When it comes to general understanding of a song, the results are the same. Those with better grades also report a very good understanding of songs most times, while those with lower grades report not understanding songs more often. All in all the results are not conclusive and we may remind ourselves of the explanation put forward in the study involving Chinese students learning English. In the afore mentioned study those who only periodically were taught using songs showed less improvement than the control group; the group not using music at all, and those who were taught exclusively with music showed most significant improvement. The same thing might be the case here in Croatia, i.e. those who listen to music in a target language on a daily basis and therefore are continuously exposed to it also benefit from it the most. Similar to the other studies discussed, our study also shows that it is very rare that a student never listens to music in the English language, there is a considerable number of those who do it periodically, that is a few times a week or a few times a month. Once again, referring to the study done with Chinese students where that type of teaching seems to actually have impeded the process of learning, we may guess that the reasons for lesser achievement of learners Croatia are similar.

Another possible reason for vague results is the small number of students that participated in the study. As for high school students only grammar school students were included. A major obstacle during the conducting of this study was that we were unable to attain the acceptance of the headmasters of vocational schools to participate in the study which might have provided us with a broader specter of subjects and their interests all of which might also have revealed a different musical interest. As for the elementary school students, 46 students participated. On the whole, the number of participants involved is small and not heterogeneous enough to provide us with a representative sample. Overall we can conclude that the majority of the participants enjoys listening and often listens to songs in

English. The fact that there is no notable difference, that is, no great number of those who do not listen to songs in English we might also explain by the modern times we live in and the accessibility of Internet and YouTube. Before this technological development, opportunities to hear different types of music and songs in different languages were rare, often expensive and basically more difficult to come by. Basically, most genres of music or music from around the world were not so available to the majority of the population and one was usually limited to the music in one's surrounding.

CONCLUSION

This study gives an overview of the habits of learners of English as a foreign language in Croatia, Zagreb aged 13 to 18, with regards to listening to songs in the English language. The questionnaire for conducting the study was designed to investigate student's habits, their age and their inclination to listen to pop music in general. Previously conducted research focused mostly on the possible effect music might have in the classroom while being used as a teaching tool. In this study however we tried to establish a link between listening to music and our subject's grades. We relied on grades as a tool that makes assessment of one's knowledge or language proficiency as objective, fair and transparent as possible. Actual habits or opinions of learners had not been investigated, nor their immersion in the language outside of classroom.

In order to obtain more reliable results further research is necessary. For example, a study involving more students, or generally learners of English, from a geographically wider area, and possibly more varied age difference of the subjects. In addition, an experimental approach would be far more accurate and useful where actual knowledge and level of proficiency might be established for each subject. Since up until now the results have been equivocal, yet intriguing, further and more detailed research is required to pinpoint the exact link between music and language and thus the possible positive effects an input in the form of music may have in language acquisition.

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